

Elevation of the Holy Cross
Russian Orthodox Church
South Naknek
Alaska

HABS No. AK-82

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ELEVATION OF THE HOLY CROSS RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

HABS No. AK-82

Location: South Naknek, south side of Naknek River, Alaska.

Present Owner: Alaska Diocese, Orthodox Church in America.

Present Occupant: Elevation of the Holy Cross Russian Orthodox Church.

Present Use: Church.

Significance: A number of historic Russian Orthodox churches survive in Alaska, built by Native congregations in traditional forms. The lines of this simple rectangular, gable-roofed church have been interrupted by a major addition between the existing nave and vestibule, a frequently used method of enlarging a nave.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1930, according to Paul Chuan, warden of the church in Naknek.
2. Original plans and construction: Both nave and sanctuary were covered by the gable roof of this rectangular, wood-framed church.
3. Alterations and additions: In the late 1980s, an addition to the nave was constructed on the west end, and the vestibule moved to the west end of the addition.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The simple rectangular form, encompassing both nave and sanctuary, has received a major addition on the west end.
2. Condition of fabric: fair.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The original main block measures 18'-3" x 30'-3", with the nave addition measuring 18'-3" x 20'-2", and a vestibule on the west measuring 10'-3" x 10'-4".

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2. Foundations: Wood post.
3. Walls: The walls are covered with beveled siding, painted white. The nave addition is covered with boards, as yet unpainted.
4. Structural system: Wood frame.
5. Stoop: In front of the vestibule are two steps of tongue-and-groove boards.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The front door has five horizontal panels.
 - b. Windows: The nave and sanctuary windows have six-over-six-light sash. There are no windows in the nave addition. The vestibule has a six-light window.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: The gable roofs over the main block and vestibule are covered with wood shingles, painted red. The nave addition has boards on the roof, but has not yet been shingled.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: The eaves on the main block and vestibule are plain, and the nave addition has exposed rafter ends.
 - c. Cupolas: The main block has three crosses on its roof.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The nave in the main block is one open space, separated from the sanctuary on the east by the iconostas. The west wall of the nave has not yet been removed, but when it is, the addition will become part of the nave. The vestibule is on the west end.
2. Stairways: There is a two-step amvon with a semi-hexagonal projection in the center.
3. Flooring: The floors are covered with tongue-and-groove boards in the sanctuary, wall-to-wall carpeting in the nave, boards in the nave addition, and masonite in the vestibule.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls and tray ceiling are covered with plywood, painted white with apple green trim. The vestibule is finished with plywood, and the nave addition is as yet unfinished.

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5. Doorway: There is a five-panel door between the nave and its new addition.
6. Decorative features: The iconostas has plywood walls and round-arched doorways. There are handmade wooden sconces on the iconostas, and three wooden candlestands in the church. There is also a new brass chandelier.

D. Site:

The church is set back from the river, in the middle of town, in the midst of a fenced churchyard. The church faces west, with its altar on the east, as is traditional among Russian Orthodox churches.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Chuan, Paul, warden of the church in Naknek, who was born in Naknek in 1901, interviewed by author, May 30, 1990.

Mongin, Alfred, and Fr. Joseph Kreta, "National Register Nomination: Russian Orthodox Church Buildings and Sites," National Park Service, 1979, includes a ca. 1975 photograph of this church, before its addition.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Documentation of the Elevation of the Holy Cross Russian Orthodox Church was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), a division of the National Park Service, the state of Alaska, and the Icon Preservation Task Force. The project was executed under the general direction of Robert J. Kapsch, chief of HABS/HAER, and Boyd Evison, Alaska Regional Director, National Park Service. Recording was carried out during summer 1990 by Steven M. Peterson, project director; Jet Lowe, photographer; and Alison K. Hoagland, historian, who prepared this report.